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ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography cites 36 articles dealing with the influence of television viewing on the attitudes and values of the young child. Articles are listed in three categories--negative, ambivalent, and positive. The material contained in the "negative" approach indicates that television has increased unfavorable reactions among young children, while the "ambivalent" articles describe both positive and negative effects. Articles taking a "positive" approach dispute the antisocial effects and emphasize the prosocial effects of television viewing. (CHC)

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AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF LITERATURE DEALING WITH THE IMPACT OF TELEVISION VIEWING ON THE BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS OF THE YOUNG CHILD

BY

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Introduction

A vast communication explosion has taken place with the invention of television. After parents, television has become the most potent influence on the attitudes and values of the young child. Therefore, the following questions should be considered when literature pertinent to this subject is examined. How much impact has television had on the behavior patterns of the young child? Has it promoted aggressive behavior in all children or just some? Has it had a positive effect as well as a negative effect on behavioral patterns? Have parents been aware of their responsibility in controlling the television? Have young children been more influenced by television than older children? Have boys been affected more than girls?

Teachers who have worked with the young child have a particular interest in this subject. They have been in a position to view the young child in both free play and controlled situations. The aggressive behavior displayed by some children has appeared to be directly related to television. However, it has been more difficult to observe the positive or prosocial behavior resulting from television.

This paper was designed as an annotated bibliography. It's purpose was to show the negative, ambivalent and positive viewpoints of television viewing in relationship to the young child. The material contained in the negative approach indicated that television has increased unfavorable reactions among young children.

The literature related to the ambivalent approach indicated that television viewing produced both positive and negative effects. The material found in the positive approach disputed the antisocial effects and promoted the proscial effects of television.

Annotated Bibliography

Television and the Young Child - Negative

Carter, Douglass, and Strickland, Stephen. TV Violence And The Child, Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1975, 167 pp.

This book concentrated on television as an object of concern. It revealed unfavorable information relating to the Surgeon General's Advisory Committee and its findings. The authors considered the governments effectiveness when dealing with social objectives. They also discussed the influence of citizen action on our communication system. They concluded that the nation's institutions were ill equipped to carry out the objectives assigned to them. They implied that the public has been handed another "cover-up" with the release of the Surgeon General's report.

Drabman, Ronald S., and Thomas, Margaret Hanratty, "Does TV Violence Breed Indifference?" Journal of Communication 25: 86-89, Autumn, 1975.

This study demonstrated that exposure to TV violence could increase normal children's toleration of real life aggression. Young children were divided into two groups. One group viewed a "Hopalong Cassidy" film or a broadcast detective series. The other group viewed a baseball film or no film. After viewing these two types of films they were asked to watch a video-tape which they thought was live. This video-tape depicted two children taunting, pushing, shoving and crying. The results showed that the children who first saw the aggressive film took significantly longer to seek appropriate adult help. The authors concluded that TV violence may be breeding indifference in children.

Halpern, Werner I., "Turned-On Toddlers," Journal of Communication 25: 66-70, Autumn, 1975.

Halpern was critical of fast paced television such as "Sesame Street." He discussed observations of two and three year olds who displayed behavioral symptons. These symptons were directly traceable to "Sesame Street." Observations showed that jived up repetitious auditory and visual experiences were too much for some children. The author concluded that overwhelming the child with stimulating experiences became educationally counterproductive. The impedance of perceptual readiness could lead to an unsteady development process.

Haynes, Richard B., "Children's Perceptions of 'Comic' and 'Authentic' Cartoon Violence," Journal of Broadcasting 22: 63-70, Winter, 1978.

This study tested two hypothesis. The first hypothesis stated, suggested that children would perceive violence as more violent in a comic cartoon than in an authentic cartoon. The second hypothesis stated, suggested that females would perceive violent content as more violent than males. Two groups of young children viewed either authentic or comic cartoons. Each group then evaluated the cartoons to determine their perception of the violent content. The results supported the first hypothesis. The comic cartoon was perceived as more violent and less acceptable than the authentic cartoon. No differences were found between male and female perceptions of comic or authentic cartoon violence. This study indicated that violent content in comic cartoons is recognized as such by young children.

Larrick, Nancy, "Children of Television," Teacher 93: 75-77, September, 1975.

This article stressed the negative impact of television on young children. The author listed the characteristics of children of television as follows: (1) shorter attention span, (2) too little sleep, (3), more worldly attitudes, (4) little respect for teacher and parents, (5) anti cooperation values. Larrick urged teachers to investigate children's viewing habits and direct them to positive programs. She also directed parents and community organizations to become involved with responsible television programming for children.

Liebart, Robert M., and Baron, Robert A., "Some Immediate Effects of Televised Violence on Children's Behavior," Developmental Psychology 6: 469-475, June, 1972.

This study examined the hypothesis that exposure to televised violence would increase aggression among children. Young children viewed excerpts from actual television programs depicting either aggressive or non-aggressive scenes. They were then given an opportunity to aggress against each other in free play situation. The results indicated that children exposed to the aggressive scenes participated in longer attacks against peers. Boys displayed a higher amount of aggressive play, after viewing aggressive programs, than girls.

Poulos, Rita Wickes; Harvey, Susan E.; and Liebart, Robert M., "Saturday Morning Television: A Profile of the 1974-75 Children's Season," Psychological Reports 39: 1047-1057, December, 1976.

This analysis of children's programs found a high amount of aggression on commercial networks. The public broadcasting network offered less than 25% of the amount of violence shown on the commercial networks. Of the five categories of positive social behavior examined, only two appeared with any frequency. They were altruism and sympathy/explaining feelings. Character analysis revealed bias both in sex and racial/ethnic groups. Whites as a group and males in particular were portrayed as more aggressive than other racial/ethnic groups.

Quisenberry, Nancy L., "Relationship of TV Viewing to Violence and Aggression," Childhood Education 55: 59-65, October, 1968.

This article provided a review of pertinent research related to violence and it's impact on young children. According to Gerbner and Gross (1976) we must realize that television is "the central area of American Society" and that it serves as a medium of socialization. This concept is the basis for fears about the amount of violence on television and it's influence on the lives of young children. The article reviewed research by several authors who have done extensive work in this field. Although not conclusive, their work provided a basis for individuals to consider the impact of television on children in their care.

Schuetz, Stephen, and Sprafkin, Joyce N., "Portrayal of Prosocial and Aggressive Behaviors in Children's TV Commercials." Journal of Broadcasting 23: 33-40, Winter, 1979.

This study was designed to examine the portrayal of prosocial and aggressive behaviors in a sample of children's commercials. The portrayal was compared to that reported by Poulos and her associates (1975) for the actual programs which contained the commercials. Results found that the commercials contained about three times the number of aggressive acts as the programs. The authors indicated that in view of evidence, aggressive content of commercials should be more closely monitored.

Skornia, Harry, J., "The Great American Teaching Machine of Violence," Intellect 105: 347-348, April, 1977.

Skornia took a very strong stand against violence on television. He questioned the Surgeon General's Study, how it was prepared and how the press released the research. The author also indicated that there has been a scandal among the broadcast industry itself. He stated that the American people have been deceived about the relationship between television and crime in America. The author concluded by urging citizens to join consumer groups and to boycott products sponsoring offensive programs.

Waters, Harry F., "What TV Does to Kids," Newsweek 89: 62-65, February, 1977.

This article examined the impact of television on the young child. The author suggested that after parents, television has become the most potent influence in the attitudes of children. Waters indicated that studies have found that viewing violence tends to produce aggressive behavior in young children. The article concluded by pointing out various anti-social effects of specific television programs.

Television and the Young Child - Ambivalent

Baran, Stanley J., "Prosocial and Antisocial Television Content and Modeling by High and Low Self-Esteem Children," Journal of Broadcasting 18: 481-495, Fall, 1974.

The purpose of this study was to examine children's self-esteem as it relates to the quality and quantity of learning the child experiences as a result of viewing television. A general relationship emerged between self-esteem and modeling from television based upon the hypothesis and subsequent findings of this study. The low self-esteem individual will model more prosocial behaviors than the aggressive behavior he sees on television. High self-esteem males tend to model the aggressive behaviors they see on TV to a greater degree than females or low self-esteem males.

Chamberlin, Leslie J., and Chambers, Norman, "How Television is Changing Our Children," Clearing House 50: 53-57, October, 1976.

This article discusses the communication explosion that has taken place with the invention of television. It stressed that the effects of television on young viewers have assumed immense importance. This has been due to the central role of viewing in the lives of children. The article also reviewed research relating television to intelligence and socialization. The article concluded that it may be impossible to evaluate the total impact of television on children. Critics and observers seem divided as to its contribution.

Collins, W. Andrew, "The Developing Child as Viewer," Journal of Communication 25: 66-70, Autumn, 1975.

This study dealt with television portrayals and how they were perceived by children of different ages. Several different tests were administered to children ranging in ages from preschool to tenth grade. These tests measured social comprehension and evaluation of television portrayals. The results showed that the magnitude of effects decreases with age. The younger children could not cope with the amount of information needed to understand the casual plot. They were more affected by aggressive action and were more likely to imitate it. The older viewers shifted from consequence-based to motive-based evaluation of action.

Collins, W. Andrew, and Getz, Suzanne Kasper, "Children's Social Responses Following Modeled Reactions to Provocation: Prosocial Effects of a Television Drama," Journal of Personality 44: 488-500, September, 1976.

Collins and Getz designed this study to examine the effects of modeled prosocial responses to televised conflict situations. Children viewed commercial television action adventure drama. Two groups viewed models that responded either constructively or aggressively to interpersonal conflict. They were then given the opportunity to either help or hurt a peer who was completing a task. The results showed that children who had viewed constructive coping generally showed greater prosocial responding than subjects in the other two conditions. The results also indicated that younger children performed more aggressively after viewing than did older children.

Comstock, George, and others, "One Highly Attracted Public," in Television and Human Behavior, pp. 178-287, Columbia University Press, New York, 1978.

This chapter focused on young childrens attraction to television. It reviewed numerous studies done in this area. These studies included television viewing time, commercials, anti-social and prosocial behavior. The authors concluded that television should be considered a major agent of socialization. They cautioned that prosocial television is still in its infancy. Therefore, the evidence must be viewed carefully. It should not be considered as reliable as that which has been found relating aggression to behavior.

Friedrich, Lynette Kohn, and Stein, Aletha Huston, Aggressive and Prosocial Television Programs and the Natural Behavior of Preschool Children, Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, vol. 38. no. 4, Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pa., 1974, 64 pp.

This detailed study used preschool children to measure the effects of aggressive, prosocial and neutral television programming. The results concluded that aggressive television programs produced aggressive behavior regarding self regulation and interpersonal play. Prosocial viewing produced a number of positive changes in children's interpersonal behavior.

Gadberry, Sharon, "Television as Baby-Sitter; a Field Comparison of Preschoolers Behavior during Playtime and during Television Viewing," Child Development 45: 1132-1136, December, 1974.

This study was designed to answer questions regarding young childrens television habits. The research showed that compared with play, TV viewing was associated with less talking, walking and object aggression. More attention shifts, sitting and self stimulation were observed while viewing TV. Results of the study also indicated TV may affect parental socialization practices.

Hapkiewicz, Walter G., and Roden, Audrey H., "The Effect of Aggressive Cartoons on Children's Interpersonal Play," Child Development 45: 1583-1585, November, 1971.

This research was designed to study the effects of aggressive cartoons on young children's interpersonal play. The results indicated there was no difference among groups on measures of interpersonal aggression. However, the study showed that boys viewing aggressive cartoons exhibited more aggressive behavior than girls. Boys also demonstrated more prosocial behavior than girls, but boys who viewed the aggressive cartoon performed this response at a reduced rate.

Harvey, Susan E.; Sprafkin, Joyce N.; and Rubenstein, Eli, "Prime Time Television: A Profile of Aggressive and Prosocial Behavior," Journal of Broadcasting 23: 179-189, Spring, 1979.

This study examined the aggressive and prosocial content of television programs during and after Family Viewing Time (FVT). The programs were rated for aggression and five acts of positive social behavior. The study indicated that programs aired during FVT did average a lower rate of violence. However, violence was not entirely eliminated during the early evening viewing hours for children. Examination of positive social behavior, showed only sympathy/explaining feelings and altruism appeared with and meaningful frequency. The study concluded that more research needs to be done in the area of prosocial television.

Katz, Lilian G., "Watch Your Television-Watching Child," Parents 54: 92, November, 1979.

This article was directed to parents of young children. The author suggested that research over the past twenty years has been both mixed and controversial. However, evidence has indicated that children learn desirable as well as aggressive behavior from television. Katz urged parents to be in control of the television. They should watch programs with their children and be selective in what they watch. First and foremost they should turn the set off when necessary.

Patterson, Amos C., and Neustadter, Cheri, "How to Cope with Violence on the Tube," Audiovisual Instruction 23: 40-42, September, 1978.

This article reviewed research studies relating young children, television and violence. The authors felt that data produced thus far are inconclusive. Data do not prove that viewing violence on television will produce the same behavior in children. The authors suggested that more extensive research needs to be undertaken in this field of study. They urged educators to become involved with television and to teach the positive effects.

Prawat, Dorothy M., and Prawat, Richard S., "Preschoolers Viewing Behavior While Watching Two Types of Television Fare," Perceptual and Motor Skills 40: 575-582, April, 1975.

The authors compared preschooler's reactions while watching segments of "Sesame Street" and "The Pink Panther" (a violent cartoon). An effort was made to assess their viewing preference for the two types of programs. The children responded with significantly more nonverbal affect, mostly in the form of smiles, for "The Pink Panther" segment than for "Sesame Street." The two programs did not differ in verbal affect, nonverbal or in verbal relating behaviors. The children showed more motor movement initiation than imitation while watching both programs. This study contradicted the notion that television is a passive medium for young children.

Stein, A. Huston, and Wright, John C., "Children and Television: Effects of the Medium, It's Content and It's Form," Journal of Research and Development 13: 20-31, Fall, 1979.

This article presented an overview of research on television and children during the past three decades. The 1950's were times of concern with the effects of television as a medium. Concentration was focused on how television affected the lives of children and families. In the 1960's concern shifted to the content of the programs. Specific concern was directed to the effects of violent content on aggressive behavior of children. In the 1970's research turned to the positive as well as the negative uses of television. The authors concluded it is now time to concentrate on the prosocial effects of TV.

United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, "Television and the Behavior of Preschool Children," in Television and Social Learning (vol. 2 in Television and Social Behavior), pp. 346-371, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1972.

This study pointed out the difficulties in evaluating the effects of television on the preschool child. The study suggested that efforts be expanded to discover the beneficial effects of television. In doing so the following questions should be investigated: What makes a program good? What do children remember about what they view? Will children perform what they know? What do children think about television and who watches what?

United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, "Television Content and Young Children's Behavior," in Television and Social Learning (vol. 2 in Television and Social Behavior), pp. 202-317, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1972.

This study examined the effects of television content on the naturalistic behavior of the preschool child. Preschool children were exposed to aggressive programs, (Batman) prosocial programs (Mister Roger's) or neutral films. The findings were consistant with views of critics. The results indicated there were behavioral effects associated with viewing violence. The results also supported the belief that television can play an important role in positive social development. The authors concluded that more prosocial programs should be developed.

United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, "Explorations in Patterns of Television Viewing by Preschool-age Children," in Television in Day-to-Day Life, Patterns of Use (vol. 4 in Television and Social Behavior), pp. 257-271, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1972.

This exploratory study used information gathered directly from preschool children. It focused on the preschool childs use of television and other media. One-hundred fifty-eight children of disparate backgrounds were used in the study. Follow-up interviews were obtained from approximately half of the mothers. The children's responses provided testimony that mass media plays an important part in the preschool childs life. The results showed that viewing patterns were particulary heavy during afternoons and Saturday morning. Sex and ethnic differences were apparent in the program choices of these children. The study concluded that the pattern of television use takes shape before children enter first grade.

Television and the Young Child - Positive

Anderson, Daniel R.; Levin, Stephen R.; and Lorch, Elizabeth Pugzles, "The Effects of TV Program Pacing on the Behavior of Preschool Children," AV Communication Review 25: 159-166, Summer, 1977.

This study examined short term effects of TV program pacing on the subsequent behavior of young children. Seventy-two four year olds were used in the study. Two groups viewed either a rapidly paced "Sesame Street" program, or a very slowly paced "Sesame Street" program. The third group had stories read to them. Immediately following the media experience they were given two tests. These measured their tendency to approach a cognitive task impulsively or reflectively. Immediately following the test they were video-taped in an observation room with a variety of toys. The results showed no evidence that rapid television pacing had a negative impact on preschool childrens behavior.

Coates, Brian, and Pusser, H. Ellison, "Positive Reinforcement and Punishment in 'Sesame Street' and 'Mister Rogers'," Journal of Broadcasting, 19: 143-151, Spring, 1975.

The purpose of this study was to measure the positive reinforcement and punishment on "Sesame Street" and "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood." The seven measures of the study consisted of positive reinforcement and punishment for cognitive and social behavior by adult, child and fantasy characters. The results indicated that both "Sesame Street" and "Mr. Rogers" presented positive reinforcement; however, more positive reinforcement was given on "Mister Rogers" than on "Sesame Street." The study showed that both programs primarily consisted of adult and fantasy characters giving positive reinforcements for social behavior.

Coates, Brian; Pusser, H. Ellison; and Goodman, Irene, "The Influence of 'Sesame Street' and 'Mister Rogers' Neighborhood' on Children's Social Behavior in the Preschool," Child Development 47: 138-144, March, 1976.

This study was designed to assess the influence of "Sesame Street" and "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" on the preschool child's social behavior. Observations of the children's behavior were conducted before, during and after one week of exposure to each of the programs. These observations consisted of how many times the children gave positive reinforcement and punishment to other children and adults. For the children whose baseline scores were high "Sesame Street" had no significant effect on behavior. "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" significantly increased the positive reinforcements given by all children.

Friedrich, Lynette K., and Stein, Aletha H., "Prosocial Television and Young Children: The Effects of Verbal Labeling and Role Playing on Learning and Behavior," Child Development 46: 27-38, March, 1975.

The first purpose of this study was to assess both the effects and performance of prosocial television. The second purpose was to explore verbal labeling and role playing on learning and helping behavior. Seventy-three kindergarten children were assigned to one of five conditions for four training sessions. The results showed that children learn the prosocial content of television programs and transfer it to other situations. Support was also found for the prediction that training enhances verbal learning and affects actual helping behavior. The verbal labeling had the greatest impact on the verbal measure of learning, particularly for girls. Role playing was more effective, particulary for boys in increasing non-verbal helping behavior.

Lopiparo, Jerome J., "Aggression on TV Could Be Helping Our Children" Intellect 105: 345-346, April, 1977.

This article stressed the positive effects of aggression and violence on television. It suggested that aggression can be healthful. The author argued that critics have failed to advise the public of the positive aspects of media aggression. For the vast majority of children, violence viewed on TV does no harm. Overt behavior may actually be reduced by this type of viewing.

Moore, Shirley G., "The Effects of Television on the Prosocial Behavior of the Young Child," Young Children 47: 60-65, July, 1977.

This study reviewed findings of Friedrich and Stein (1973); Coates, Pusser and Goodman (1976); and Paulsan (1974). Reports showed that children do imitate the behaviors of some of the prosocial characters they see on television as well as some of the aggressive characters. Programs such as "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" appear to be quite effective in influencing attitudes and behavior of young children. Report stressed that more work is needed in the area of prosocial effects of television. Important question is, as stated by Stein and Friedrich (1975), "Who decides what is prosocial?"

Paulson, F. Leon, "Teaching Cooperation On Television," AV Communication Review 22: 229-246, February, 1974.

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the cooperation taught on "Sesame Street." The study concerned itself with disadvantaged children. It tested the hypothesis that children who watched "Sesame Street" would cooperate more. Thirty-six children watched "Sesame Street" for one hour a day in their day school. Forty-two other children did not view the program. All children were administered a situational test which placed them in a realistic situation. Additional tests measured picture recognition relating to "Sesame Street." The results showed that the children who watched "Sesame Street" learned to cooperate more. The author concluded that more programs must be produced that teach positive social goals.

Quisenberry, Nancy L., and Klasek, Charles B., "Can Watching TV Be Good for Children?" Audiovisual Instruction 22: 56-57, March, 1977.

Quisenberry and Klasek criticized Larrick's negative TV report (1975). They disagreed with Larrick's viewpoints relating the impact of television to young children. The authors concluded that current research is repetitious. They urged educators to look carefully at research and teach children the positive effects of television. The authors believed television can be more helpful than harmful.

Sprafkin, Joyce N.; and Rubinstein, Eli A., "Childrens Television Viewing Habits and Prosocial Behavior; A Field Correlational Study," Journal of Broadcasting 17: 265-276, Summer, 1979.

This study was conducted primarily to measure the relationship between young children's television viewing habits and the degree of prosocial behavior exhibited in school. It was also designed to analyze possible correlations of children's choices for and exposure to prosocial television content. Results showed that the correlations obtained between viewer habits and prosocial behavior were much lower than those obtained between viewing habits and aggressive behavior.

Summary

The impact of television viewing on the young child has been a major concern for the past twenty years. The research which has been done has been mixed, controversial and repetitious. However, many studies have been in agreement in certain areas.

Children have learned both desirable and undesirable behavior from television. Younger children have demonstrated more aggressive behavior than older children after viewing violence on television. Boys have reacted more aggressively to television than girls. Children of low socioeconomic status have shown more positive behavior after viewing prosocial television than children of high socioeconomic status.

In view of the evidence which has been collected, parents must still be in control of the television. Selective turning on has become as important as selective turning off. Educators also have a responsibility to study the media and promote the positive effects of television.

Early research concentrated on the antisocial effects of television. More recent studies have been directed toward the area of prosocial television. Such research is still in its infancy and needs to be pursued. We cannot begin to take advantage of the untold possibilities of television until we take the medium seriously. Technology has given us a potent teacher. Now we must harness it and point it in the right direction.

We all need to take responsibility for what is being taught on television. Parents and citizens groups should join forces and take action by pressuring the broadcasting industry when necessary. We must fully understand the true impact of television on the lives of our children and use it to promote positive social goals.